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AMERICA'S SHARE IN A PARTITION OF CHINA.

BY DEMETRIUS C. BOULGER.

IN a previous number of this REVIEW,* I ventured to predict that the dissolution of the Chinese Empire was inevitable and not remote. Recent events have not diminished the probability of that disruption; and, however reluctant each Power may be to begin the process, the anti-foreign sentiments of the Chinese masses, not less than the collapse of their Government, will leave no practical alternative. The world will have to prevent anarchy in China, as well as to uphold the common interests of humanity and civilization. After proclaiming to the skies the super-excellence of the Open Door policy, the discovery will be made that the continued existence of a Chinese Empire is not necessary for its application, and that the states of the world can themselves come to a mutual understanding without the intervention of Manchu Emperor or Tsung-li-Yamen, to observe the common fiscal and commercial policy which is illustrated by the phrase of the "open door." The case of Central Africa will be cited to justify the summoning of a conference for the division of spheres, and also for the proclamation of the principles by which the Powers will regulate their conduct and action for the general good. The adoption of this course may come at any moment; on the other hand, it is quite possible that an amelioration of the situation in China may lead to its adjournment. But, whether imminent or deferred, it is the only course that will prevent China from falling under the exclusive domination of Russia, which would be the gravest menace for everybody.

The practical question which the American public has to decide, and which I wish to invest with some interest for American readers, is, What will be America's share in a partition of China?

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I am aware that there is a preliminary question still nominally undecided, as to whether the American people should interest or at all events commit, themselves in problems of government and conquest beyond the limits of their continent. Very few American citizens are not asking themselves the question, Can we wisely, or even possibly, depart from the Monroe doctrine so as to include dependencies and conquests in the Republic? Even with regard to the Philippines, America's by the sword, where the task is not rendered more complicated and difficult by the interpolation of any outside claims or influences, as must be the case in China, no final, irrevocable decision has yet been taken toward laying the foundation stone of an American Colonial Empire. However reluctant the American people may be to take the plunge into the unknown, it seems to the on-looker that they have gone too far to draw back without loss of dignity and self-respect. They cannot make themselves a party to a hollow and ephemeral gift of autonomy to the Philippines, when they must know that their withdrawal would be at once followed by the enforcement of the German pretensions, which they only just anticipated two years ago. Committed to the task of ending Spanish misrule in the Pacific, neither the timidity arising from inexperience in colonial administration, nor the engrossing pursuit of material prosperity under conditions which make the United States "the spoilt child of Fortune" among the nations, will allow them to take their hand from the plough till their work is done. Nor can it be supposed for a moment that the people of America will voluntarily decline to take a share in the arrangement of the affairs of China because it presents difficulties, and must entail responsibilities. The modifications introduced into the Monroe doctrine for the comparatively small local question of the Philippines will have to be enlarged or extended so far as to embrace the vast, complicated and pregnant problem of China.

Evidence of these truths has already been afforded in the prominent part American diplomacy took in obtaining general assent to the theory of the Open Door, which represents common interest among all States that will prove far more durable than the Chinese Empire. The enforcement of this principle has to be provided for, not merely during the uncertain life of the existing Chinese administration, but also under the far more onerous conditions that will come into force when it has disappeared.

Something far more definite and binding than the promises given to Mr. Conger will be needed to keep ambitious potentates and aggressive cabinets in the straight path of tolerance for others. The United States have made a formal and emphatic statement as to what they expect from other Governments. They have demanded unrestricted trade privileges and freedom, the whole of China is to be free from prohibitive duties, and all the Treaty Powers are to enjoy equal rights and the same tariff. The assent given to these demands, under one set of circumstances, is not to be ignored or put aside because new conditions have supervened. But to keep it in force will require far more vigorous action than was expected when "the open door" first became a popular phrase. It will not be enough for the United States Government to express a hope or a wish, to qualify its military preparations with a declaration that, in no eventuality, are they intended for war, or to leave England to bear alone the stress and heat of the day. The United States took an honorable lead in the process of arranging the Chinese question through Mr. Conger's dispatch. They cannot back out of the whole business because events have moved with unexpected celerity, or because dark clouds appear on the political horizon. They must see the game out, whether it has to be played on the green cloth of diplomacy or "the ensanguined field of Mars." A regretful glance backwards is permissible, but the American people have crossed the Rubicon of imperial responsibility.

Having done so, they must equip themselves so that they may meet these new obligations with a dignity and skill worthy of their name and power; and the point which I expressly wish to bring before them is that they should supplement the accepted theory of the Open Door with a policy that will take its place at the approaching critical moment, and that will second England's efforts to prevent Russia's obtaining the preponderance in China. The Open Door theory possesses obvious recommendations, and it will continue to serve as a connecting bond between the Governments when China has been broken into fragments. But its chances of future, practical value depend on the acquisition by those who advocate it of adequate territorial jurisdiction, or rather of spheres of influence in the future partition of China. Unless this precautionary measure is taken, it may reasonably be feared that the Open Door theory will be exploded, to the loss and

confusion of those who may have clung to it too long. Therefore, wisdom dictates that deliberately and in good time each of the great Powers should indicate and claim what it considers would be its best sphere of influence and responsibility in a partition of China. The claim might not have to be enforced for a long time, if at all; as the work to be accomplished in China should be rather of a constructive than a destructive character. Each Power would accept the responsibility of maintaining order, security and freedom of trade, besides other Treaty rights, within its sphere; and, in the first place, there would be little or no interference with the existing Chinese administration or system of laws. Partition would not necessarily mean conquest, and it is probable that the Chinese themselves would create, with very little guidance or direction, administrations that would suffice for all practical purposes and render any conquest unnecessary. The work that has to be done in China is creative and restorative. A better feeling toward foreigners has to be evoked, and something like ordinary honesty and efficiency has to be restored to Chinese government.

The task, even in its most restricted sense, is too big to be entrusted to any single State. There are, indeed, only two States which would seriously think of undertaking it with a general mandate, or in pursuit of their own separate ambitions. They are Russia and Japan; and to neither could the rest of the world safely entrust the disciplining of China's millions, and their absorption in the systems of those two aggressive Empires. England, but only with America's co-operation, might have the strength to bring the work to a successful ending for the common good, but she has not the will. Public opinion in England would regard as a madman the individual who would suggest adding the burden of a Chinese Empire to that already borne in India and South Africa. It will support a compromise, a postponement of responsibility in the Far East, as long as possible; and, when it finds that a decision must be taken, the widest range of its action will be within the sphere which has already been denoted as belonging to British interests. There is no want of sincerity in the timely decision to supplement the adherence to the Open Door principle with the formation of a clear and definite plan to make the phrase a reality in the part of China which is essential to Pan-English trade. That plan has been adopted with greater

vagueness and uncertainty than the importance of the matter and the perils of the hour demand, but still with sufficient clearness so long as the heart of the Empire beats true. The Yangtze Valley has been declared a British reservation, and the statement has received solemn indorsement by appearing in a Blue Book. As all the world knows, it does not depend on the official imprimatur; its value is bound up in English naval superiority.

England is not the only Power that has defined, so far as words go, a sphere of influence. France has acted similarly in Southern China, where, with greater precision but less power, she has laid claim to the provinces of Kwang-se, Kwei-chow and part, if not the whole, of Yun-nan. It is unnecessary for the moment to inquire how far that claim violates the reversionary rights of India in the hinterland of Burmah. In the same way as France has done, Germany has announced that she regards the province of Shan-tung as specially appertaining to her, and the theory of "the hinterland" is one that the countrymen of Prince Bismarck know how to work for all it is worth. The German appetite is so good that, in any partition of China, one province would scarcely suffice to satisfy it. Japan also, with one paw over on Corea, claims the province of Fuh-keen and its admirable port of Foo-chow. Italy will not resign her hopes of San-mun Bay, Austria has still to be satisfied, and Belgium will claim a "neutral" port, or settlement perhaps, at Hankow, as a mode of adjusting some future Anglo-Russian difference. All these Powers have more or less clearly announced their expectations that a certain piece of Tom Tiddler's ground is to fall to their share. Two States alone have held back from making any similar declarations, Russia and America, but from very different motives. Russia regards as her sphere the territory covered by her Cossacks, and the watchword of her extreme representatives is that the whole of China, and indeed of Asia, is to fall to her share. With such views, the definition of a sphere in any circumscribed portion of China would be useless.

America has not defined a sphere of influence or action, because she has not long approached the consideration of the subject with any serious intention of taking part in its settlement. Recent events have had much to do with any decision she may have formed or be in process of forming; and, for a time, the belief in the Open Door panacea may have encouraged the hope that

no more definite or committing step need be taken than to call upon the Governments to subscribe to an admirable general principle. The extraordinary outbreak of animosity in China against all foreigners, accompanied by the collapse of the existing government, so far at least as the discharge of its responsible functions goes, has dispelled these expectations, and brings home to everybody the need of prompt and strenuous action. While it is tolerably clear what direction the plans of other Powers will take, over and beyond the assertion and enforcement of certain common rights and principles which none of them is yet disposed to see broken or destroyed in China, the plans of the United States are still shrouded in darkness, because they have not, as a matter of fact, been formed. The time has arrived, however, when a decision cannot wisely be any longer deferred, because the area of unappropriated, or rather unclaimed, sphere in China is rapidly diminishing and may soon disappear. Of course, there is no need for a decision if the United States are content to play the passive part of a mere looker-on in the settlement of the Chinese question, and to limit their diplomatic action to the enunciation of admirable platitudes. But they can only stultify themselves in China at the cost of future losses and even dangers; for, in the evolution of the Chinese people, is wrapped up the destinies of the human race.

Taking the more natural view of what America's policy will have to be, and assuming that she, like other Powers, will have to supplement her support of the general principle of the Open Door, with a claim to a definite sphere in China, the practical question follows, What and where is that sphere to be? The diminishing area available renders a prompt decision necessary, for America may find herself supplanted by other contestants. Speaking practically, there are only two areas on the extensive seaboard of China left available that would suffice in themselves to meet America's claims and legitimate expectations. They are, first, the province of Che-keang, with the ports of Ning-po and Hangchow, the famous Kinsai of Marco Polo; and, secondly, the northern part of the province of Kwang-tung, with the port of Swatow, to which might be added, by arrangement with Japan, Amoy, across the frontier of Fuh-keen. There would be some disadvantages in encroaching on a different province, and if America would accept the responsibility for Canton, there would be no

necessity to claim Amoy, which would thus be left in the Japanese sphere. The opinion may be hazarded that the province of Che-keang represents the preferable American sphere. It is more compact, and the immediate responsibilities would not be such as to deter or discourage American administrators on the threshold of their task. Canton itself represents the most difficult separate problem in China, because it is a focus of anti-foreign animosity and of perhaps the greatest ruffianism in the whole country. The Power accepting responsibility for the Kwang-tung province will, sooner or later, have to deal with it.

When the question as to what America's sphere in China should be, first presented itself to my mind, the most attractive form seemed to be a joint Anglo-American sphere, because it could have embraced a larger part of China, and thus present a national form of government south of the Yellow River (Hoang-ho). But America has held back too long, and opinion is too much divided in the States to render such a project practicable. The enormously preponderant interests of England in China render it impossible for her to delay her measures for the convenience of any one else, or to subordinate her policy to the movements and intentions of any other Power. An Anglo-American sphere would be an ideal arrangement; but, unfortunately, American opinion is not sufficiently pronounced at this moment to render it practicable. We must, therefore, fall back on the separate sphere for America, which, practically speaking, can only be established in two quarters. The first step in the claim of a sphere is easy and surprisingly simple. The United States Government, like the German, the Japanese, the French and the English Governments before it, makes the announcement that it regards, let me say, the province of Che-keang as its sphere. The statement is duly noted. Nobody protests, nobody applauds, yet on Time's iron tablets every one knows that an important notch has been made. America will then have left the benches to enter the arena.

Having denoted the sphere, America becomes an active partner with the other Powers in the regulation of the Chinese question, and she commits herself to the specific task of doing what good government, security of life and trade demand in her sphere. How it is to be done is a question for the future and also for each Government to settle according to its own lights. The

preliminary stage of study and investigation will probably prove one of many years, and in some of the spheres active intervention, in any other form than advice and possibly admonition, would never become necessary. A partition of China in the manner indicated does not necessarily imply its conquest. It signifies, primarily, the easier treatment of a vast subject, by its subdivision among a number of interested parties or States. It also signifies for the rest of the world that no single State shall be permitted to develop and utilize the latent strength and resources of China for its own purposes and policy. The policy of partition among spheres of interest and, if necessary, of action may be described as one of precaution and vigilance. By directly interesting the great body of the Powers in the work, a policy of assurance may be considered to have been taken out against the undue aggrandisement of any one of them. When the Governments announce that they are directly interested in what happens or has to be done at one spot, they will watch more closely what is being done at other spots, lest it should encroach on their rights or prove the harbinger of peril to the common interest and weal. It is a partition of interest, interference and control to which the world is being invited in China, and not of conquest. The present events, however they turn out, must prove fatal to the existing Chinese Government. The period of hoodwinking by the Tsung-li-Yamen must be ended, as well as that of irresponsibility among the officials with whom we have to conduct business. Whether the Chinese authority be an Emperor or a Viceroy, it must be clear, first, that he understands the rights of those who are in treaty relations with his country and possess formally conceded privileges; and, secondly, that he has the power as well as the will to perform his part of the transaction. We may pity the ill-starred and well-meaning young Emperor, Kwang-hsu, but we cannot safely regard him as the *deus ex machinâ* who is to save the situation. And if Kwang-hsu is not possible, then it may reasonably be doubted whether any other member of the present ruling Manchu family would be eligible. For it cannot be overlooked that the present outbreak has been mainly due to the Manchu element in the Government, and to the bitter and implacable hostility of the Princes of the reigning House. It almost looks as if the Tartars, believing their supremacy to be menaced between the demands of the Foreign Powers and the

propaganda of the native Chinese Reform movement, had decided to enter upon a life and death struggle with the foreign devils, in the hope of expelling them forever and thus saving their own position. To entertain such a scheme reveals no doubt extreme ignorance, but all the available evidence before the Boxer outbreak pointed to the conclusion that nothing had been learnt at Peking; and those in diplomatic relations with the Chinese reported, after Li Hung Chang's return from Europe, that both he and the Dowager Empress had become more reactionary than ever. Among the princes, ministers and diplomatists of the existing rotten régime in China there is none capable of forming a new, sound administration. They are more than incapable; they are not even willing.

Whatever chance of internal reform there may be in China must be sought for in a different direction, and new men can alone supply the material out of which a reformed administration can be constructed. That such men are to be found cannot be doubted; and the example of Kang-yu-wei is encouraging for those who believe that, amid the chaos of Chinese affairs, and the catastrophes still awaiting the ancient system of their race, the Chinese will themselves be able, with some external assistance and direction, to restore order in their own household in, say, the next half century. They have the old Confucian dictum that "after long union must come disunion, and after that again will be reunion," and they know that seven centuries have elapsed since the Middle Kingdom was divided between the Lungs and the Kins, and that before them the sub-division of the country into several kingdoms was no uncommon feature in its history. The fact that daunts foreigners in prescribing for the sick man of the Far East, viz., that he may go to pieces under treatment, has no terrors for a Chinese reformer, who knows that the provinces could be grouped into kingdoms, and that any amelioration of the situation must first be local and progressive before it becomes general and national. If thoughtful and instructed Chinese were taken as counsellors by the foreigners in each of the spheres, their advice would be to interfere as little as possible with the fabric of the existing administration, and indeed to restrict all interference at first to restraining the corruption of the officials, controlling the revenue and expenditure, and softening the cruel penal code. These changes would be so popular that little

or no coercion would be needed to give them effect. The direct responsibility incurred by the partitioning Powers would be far less than is thought, and the task that seems so formidable at a distance might, on closer inspection, prove exceedingly light. That it is a task for the good of the world cannot be doubted, and it is equally certain that sooner or later the Powers will have to take it in hand. What is not so certain, for the moment, is whether the United States will lend a hand in the work, or stand aloof.

This uncertainty brings us back to the question with which we started, "Where and what America's share in a partition of China is to be." A decision on the question cannot be safely deferred. The area left open is diminishing, the number of competitors is increasing, and those who face the responsibility before all the Treaty Powers in China will not show any consideration for those who shirk it, when the rewards have to be divided. The responsibility is not adequately faced by declarations in support of an Open Door, when the mansion behind it is in flames. The period when Mr. Conger's dispatch was the feature of the question is quite recent in point of time, but it is already ancient history. A momentous decision has to be taken, and that within a brief period, as to whether America will participate in the imminent disruption of the Chinese Empire. Her standing out will not prevent the contingency, which may be pronounced inevitable; but it will somewhat alter the form in which the problem will present itself for solution. It will be a form more unfavorable and more onerous for England, the champion of the Open Door under all circumstances, and the abstention of the United States will encourage not only Russia, but France and Germany also, to make their spheres exclusive to outside trade and special reserves for their own. The consequences of this shrinking from honorable responsibility at the psychological moment for action must be felt by America herself, not so much, perhaps, in the immediate present as in the future; but I will not obscure the fact that it must also prove very injurious to England, who is in special need at this moment of moral support and backing. She has to face the open rivalry of Russia, the secret rancor of France, and the very questionable good faith of Germany. The alliance of Japan alone is not sufficient to enable her to successfully confront so formidable a coalition, based on a common sentiment of jealousy

and dislike. Only the hearty co-operation of America can adjust the balance, and warm the chilled friendship of Germany into something like community of action.

The partition of China, which recent events have rendered practically certain, is not as formidable a contingency as has been imagined, provided that America agrees to take her legitimate share in it. Far from precipitating the arrival of Armageddon, as some alarmists affect to believe, it would tend to peace, because separate ambitions have to be subordinated to the general opinions and wishes of the Powers. America's abstention would alter the outlook, and the Continental Powers would combine to squeeze England, when war would inevitably follow for the maintenance of her Empire. If she were beaten by numbers, that dire event would signify the door more firmly closed than ever in China, and the United States would be the next mark of an anti-English league. If she were victorious, there would still remain on the debit side the cost and sacrifices of an unnecessarily colossal struggle, due to the abstention of America, with the consequent alienation of two great, kindred nations, which acting together might control and improve the destinies of the world.

I hope I have made it clear that the partition policy in China does not imply conquest. It would be an acceptance of responsibility, and each partner would agree to do a certain portion of work. The Governments having agreed among themselves that the only practical way of dealing with the Chinese problem is to sub-divide it into certain parts for each of them to work upon, would in the next place hold a conference for the enumeration and acceptance of common principles of action, and for the division of the responsibilities of the defunct Chinese Empire.

It would thus be made clear that the Powers had resolved to treat the Chinese question as a common interest, and to take timely steps to prevent the Yellow Peril from becoming a menace to them all. The work in which America is asked to take her share is a highly honorable one, and from the human point of view of the deepest interest. She can only refuse her co-operation by taking a lower seat in the family of nations, who will see in her abstention the selfish indulgence of her good fortune in possessing a position of splendid isolation.

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